

NEWS

Marine saves two people trapped in burning vehicle

SGT. DAVID SALAZAR
MPA, RS FORT LAUDERDALE

Fate tested the mettle of a newly trained Marine on Permissive Recruiter Assistance Program orders when he and his wife crossed paths with a car wreck in the early morning hours of Jan. 27.

Private First Class Jorge Martinez, a 20-year-old Naples, Fla., native, dozed off while his wife of less than one month, Mandy, drove them home from a night out near MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa.

At approximately 3 a.m., as the couple winded their way down I-75, Mandy nudged her husband and pointed to the landscape ahead of them where an SUV had rear-ended a Saturn causing the smaller car to careen over the median, through southbound lanes and into the foliage-lined embankment.

Without a thought, Martinez, still donning his Dress Blue Delta uniform, jumped out of the couple's truck and maneuvered his way through the palmetto shrubs and cypress saplings to render assistance. Mandy dialed 9-1-1 on her cell phone.

"When I came up to the car I saw that the two guys in there were unconscious and there was smoke coming out from under the hood," recalled Martinez.

Martinez tried opening the passenger-side door, but the severity of the wreckage



Sgt. David Salazar

Private First Class Jorge Martinez points to the area where his heroic acts saved the lives of two men. Martinez pulled the men from a burning vehicle Jan. 27.

coupled with the dense underbrush prevented him from opening the hatch any more than six inches. The future aircraft repairman used the opening to tap the men on their shoulders to awaken them and to allow the mounting smoke to escape from the confines of the cab.

At that moment, Martinez heard an

explosion and saw flames emerging from the car's hood. The trapped men began to panic.

"As soon as I saw those flames I knew I had to get them out of there," Martinez said. "I grabbed the door, put my left foot on the car and just pulled as hard as I could."

The Marine persisted until he managed to pry the car door open about a foot-and-a-half – just far enough to pull the groggy men from the flaming wreckage.

Just over a minute after Martinez pulled the two men a safe distance from the vehicle – the Saturn became completely engulfed in flames.

As the fire, which rose to nearly 30 feet in height, illuminated the area, Martinez treated one victim for shock and immobilized the other, who complained of serious pain, until the authorities arrived.

Martinez attributed his quick-thinking and confidence to his Marine Corps training.

"All I could think about was just how glad I was that I paid attention during first aid class [during recruit training]," Martinez said. "I'm not sure I would have known what to do if I hadn't."

The two crash victims may not have survived had Martinez hesitated to free them from the rubble. They may have suffered worse injuries or even death.

"This act saved their lives," Estero Fire Rescue Battalion Chief Chris Krajic told the Naples Daily News shortly after the incident.

"His actions in the heat of the moment, when lives were on the line, proved that he was able to make these critical decisions," said Staff Sgt. Brian Moody, canvassing recruiter with Permanent Contact Station Naples and Martinez's recruiter.

Moody believes that it wasn't just Martinez's training that came in handy.

"Martinez is mature and lithe, and it's my personal opinion that if it had been any other [private first class] just out of boot camp, the outcome may not have been as good," Moody said. "He is definitely within the top two or three Marines that I've recruited that I'd want to handle the situation if I were in a predicament like that one. I think this goes to show that we are recruiting quality members of society and making them into Marines."

NHB urges patients to utilize customer evaluation tool

PATRICIA BINNS
NHB PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

In October 2003, Naval Hospital Beaufort implemented the Interactive Customer Evaluation system.

ICE is an Internet-based customer evaluation system that allows our customers to tell us how we are doing.

It also helps the command in addressing both positive and negative feedback in a more efficient and effective manner. Web-based comment cards are available for all clinics and departments located within the main hospital building as well as those at the Branch Medical Clinics at Parris Island and MCAS Beaufort.

Beginning this month, computer stations to access the ICE Web site are available at all three locations that provide services to NHB beneficiaries.

Customers are invited to visit the ICE computer station and complete a comment card after receiving a service or product. The survey takes only

a few minutes to complete and there is also a space for additional comments. You may also leave your contact information and a customer representative will provide feedback regarding your input. Easy-to-follow instructions are posted at each computer station to assist customers in accessing the appropriate service provider.

The system is an Internet-based customer evaluation program that allows NHB customers to rate the services at the hospital.

You may also complete the comment card by logging onto <http://ice.disa.mil> or the Naval Hospital's site, www.nhbeaufort.med.navy.mil, and clicking on the ICE site link.

Naval Hospital Beaufort has accepted the challenge to

become known as a "World Class" organization by providing the highest quality health care services. The beneficiaries are the most valuable customers, so please let NHB staff know what you think.

The customers' comments and thoughts mean a great deal to the staff of NHB and provide a great tool to measure the hospital's customer service support.



Special to The Boot

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